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Issues of Working Women in Work-Life Ballance

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Abstract

Many studies have discovered that young working mothers have difficulties in balancing between work and family life. Lacked of social and physical support on childcare and house work management has some influence on their job performance. It may result in less productivity, inefficient and ineffective job management. Therefore, the fundamental issues and problems faced by married working women in managing work-life balance are the additional support system, infrastructure and services. This paper reviews the contributing factors to issues and problems faced by working women in the context of work-life balance. The method of this study is quantitative. This study involves respondents working as administrative and supporting staff in various government agencies in Tun Abdul Razak Complex (KOMTAR), Penang. The findings of the study would be able to help related agencies to provide the appropriate services, infrastructure and support systems to ease the burden of women in managing their families and hence to improve their work-life balance.

Keywords: Domestic work, Working women, Work-Life Balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In general, direction of development of a country is steered by its society. The society, consist of different sexes, ages, races and backgrounds have different roles in contributing various aspects of a country's development. Thirty or forty years ago, women used to live at home and full-time managed their children and household works. They were considered as domestic workers or household managers. The job is important because it manages human capital from home as women were developing soft skills to their children. However, in modern society, women continue the heritage of domestic work and simultaneously they are also active in labour market. This is because the influence of the opportunity to continue their formal education until tertiary level. Consequently, now women have to work in offices, shops, factories and in fixed working hours. Sometime, they have to work away from their families. Meanings that, they have to manage both housework and office work separately. Hence, this situation prompts work-family conflict or family-work conflict.

Many working women face conflicts to meet their responsibilities for families and works. The conflict results from the failure to meet the demand for work and family harmoniously causes them to be more involve with one role and have difficulty in performing the other role (Voydanoff, 1988). The suggestion to decrease the problem is to promote work-life-balance. Recently, there has been a lot of emphasis on the importance of achieving a work life balance. This concept is promoting to support women life to handle double burden when they are working both in formal and informal sectors. Women join the formal sector when they need to support and improve economic status of their family. Hence, the role of women as contributors to the families' economy

is undeniable. However, many studies show that there is no difference between gender and the need to achieve a balance between work and life. When it comes to life, it really covers a lot of things including family, health, recreation, spiritual needs, financial planning and self-improvement.

Hence, this paper will discuss the fundamental issues and problems facing by married working women in managing their work-life balance in the north of Peninsular Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The liberation of education instated in Malaysia should be stimulating a large proportion of women entering formal workforce. Despite that, according to a study by Moody's across the Asia-Pacific, Malaysia has among the lowest female labour participation rates in Asean (16 Nov 2018, TheStar). In addition, statistics has shown that even though in most of higher education institutions have majority of graduates are female (around 70 pecents), only 30 percent of those graduated are in labour force, while the rest chose to become full-time housewives (Roslilee, Nurul Nadia and Mawarti Ashik, 2016). This gives the impression that education costs invested did not give a good return or contribution to the country. It is an opportunity cost to the country as these well-educated women are not productively contributing to the country's economic growth (Hassan, 2020).

Another issue is to ensure that the existing women in labour force can carry-out their duties effectively and at the same time able to manage and their family efficiently. According to Liyana and Norizan (2017) women are often faced with childcare and other domestic responsibilities. Because of that, Cross & Linehan (2006) stress that working women are often labelled as persons with "multitasking" abilities. The feature of "multitasking" is one of the few factors that successfully balances work and family responsibilities for women. However, these double responsibilities most of the times become a major obstacle to their career development.

Many studies have discovered that young working mothers have difficulties in balancing between work and family life (Delina & Raya, 2013, Pradhan, 2016 and Boushey, 2016). Lacked of social and physical support on childcare and house work management has some influence on their job performance. It may result in less productivity, inefficient and ineffective job management.

A lot of studies have been conducted to identify factors that contribute to work-life conflict faced by working women. Delina and Raya (2013) set factors such as length of working time, work involvement and family responsibilities contributed to conflicts faced by working women to achieve work-life balance. From the study, the statement of "I find it difficult to spend time on my own hobby as well as spending time with friends and family in maintaining relationship with them" gets the highest mean score of 2.76. This clearly shows that the busy work has affected women's relationship with their families.

Das and Kushwaha (2013) set out five factors contribute to the imbalance between career and life - workplace factors, families and personal commitments, work contexts, issues relating to specific situations and supporting programs and facilities provided by employers. All these factors have been categorized into four parts such as; workplace supporting facilities; social commitment; workplace situation and; workplace support.

According to Reddy et al. (2010), workplace atmosphere plays an important role in contributing to family-work conflicts. Conceptual work pressure can be categorized into:

- 1) Role conflicts;
- 2) Overloaded workload;
- 3) Scalable work scope.

Each of the three categories can contribute to work pressure which ultimately leads to domestic conflicts.

Saranya (2015) introduced a model of career and family conflicts based on a stress-straining model by Durham (1984). His study identifies three factors that lead to family-work conflicts that are 1) family factors 2) work factors and 3) individual factors. Family factors are influenced by the number of children, life cycle stages, family involvement, and child care management. For the second factor, work factors are influenced by the type of work, the length of work time, the work involvement, the workload more than it should be, and the flexibility of work. The third factor that follows is the individual factor, where the study found that it was influenced by the value of life, gender, locus of control, and perfection. The research of David (2002) also identifies two major factors in influencing work and life balance: 1) organizational factors influenced by job requirements, work culture and 2) individual factors influenced by work orientation, personality, energy strength, personal control, age and life and career level.

Pleck (1977) stated that men had more problems at work where it eventually affects the family. As for women, they often experience conflicts where the tensions of the family affect their workplace performances. Das and Kushwaha (2013) found that family-work conflicts are more prevalent than work-family conflicts. Hence, social support from families, employers, services and facilities from various organizations are important in helping those working women to balance their responsibilities between work and family and also to reduce stress. Hence, this will promote their work performance.

Smith and Gardner (2007) conducted a study to identify the employees' benefits which could help them in balancing their lives. The most frequent benefits utilized by employees are flexible work hours, leaves to attend personal functions, paid leave and medical leave. Whereas the most favoured benefit by women employees is to be able to work from home. Availability of internet and up-to-date telecommunication facilities make this possible. This shows that women are actually requiring more time spent at home with their families.

Therefore, the fundamental issues and problems faced by married working women in managing work-life balance and the additional support system, infrastructure and services needed to resolve work-life conflict have to be addressed. So, this paper to review the contributing factors to issues and problems faced by working women.

3. METHODOLOGY

Initially this study planned to involve a total of 100 respondents with 50 administrative staff while the rest 50 are supporting staff. However, due to problems in collecting the distributed questionnaires, a total of 76 respondents with 52 supporting staff and 24 administrative staff for this study. The targeted population is the working women with

families in Pulau Pinang which are full-time workers as civil servants and having at least one child of either group (secondary school, primary school, kindergarten, or infants). The sampling method used is convenience sampling. Data was collected at Tun Abdul Razak Complex (KOMTAR) located in George Town, Penang. The study was conducted at KOMTAR as it houses various central government offices and agencies, state governments, and local authorities in one building. The most easily accessible government departments and agencies within the building are selected by researchers.

This study involves descriptive study design. It is used to identify issues and challenges faced by married working women in managing their work-life balance. The questionnaires consist of open-ended as well as private questions and related several questions on family and work environment faced by respondents. Questions in this section are answered based on likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=less agreeable, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

4. DISCUSSION

Various issues contribute to work-life balance among working women had been examined. This issues relate to family environment (family-related factors) and work environment (job-related factors). The finding shown that majority of respondent (85.5%) think that they were able to manage both their work and family life. So this finding kontras with the study of Delina & Raya, 2013, Pradhan, 2016 and Boushey, 2016 when the studies have discovered that young working mothers have difficulties in balancing between work and family life. However, based on table shown below, that young mother has no problem to deal with work and family.

4.1 Factors contributing to issues and problems faced by working women.

Various factors contribute to work-life balance among working women are been examined in this study. This involves family environment (family-related factors) as well as work environment (job-related factors) Both factors consist of 4 aspects respectively. Table 1 presents the relationship between family and work environment towards the balance quality between those two. The reported P-values are obtained by independent t-test to look for the relationship of each aspect to the quality of family and work balance. Mean score in either group of work and family balance indicate the response from the respondents. Based on the analysis, there are significant mean difference for the aspect of household management ($P=0.013$) and quality time with family ($P<0.001$) in family environment factor. The mean scores for the aspects of household management and quality time with family are higher among respondents who feel that they are not able to balance their family and work. No significant mean difference is reported for work environment factor.

This study shows respondents agree that they can manage their children. This is because their husbands are also supporting them to manage the children. They also claim that the double burden they have do not interrupt their responsibility to manage work at office. However, they have problems in managing domestic task. Domestic work refers to cooking, take care of the children, cleaning houses and any works related to managing the houseworks. This situation actually affects their quality time with the family. This is founded on the significant value in the research. Even they claim that they have work life

balance, but the domestic task still cause burden into them. In addition, they agree that they need to have more quality time with their families. Hence, this situation needs to improve to support them emotionally.

In work environment, the respondents feel they have work-life balance when they agree with working hours, burden of their work. This may be due to their ability to manage the current work stress and their adaption with current emotional support system in their organization.

Table 1: Family and work environment

Aspect	Family and work balance		P-values
	Yes	No	
Family environment			
Kids/husband management	11.35 (1.71)	11.29 (1.89)	0.926
Household management	10.26 (1.70)	12.00 (1.83)	0.013*
Quality time with family	9.16 (1.77)	11.86 (1.22)	<0.001*
Emotion	9.33 (1.66)	9.57 (2.23)	0.724
Work environment			
Working hour	10.76 (1.70)	10.71 (2.14)	0.945
Workload	8.59 (1.82)	9.57 (1.81)	0.181
Working pressure	9.30 (1.67)	10.29 (1.50)	0.138
Social support and emotion	12.03 (1.37)	10.86 (3.08)	0.355

Significant P-value (<0.10)

4.1.2 Household management and quality time with family

Since there is a significant mean difference of household management and the quality time with family in family environment factor, there is a need to look for which statements contribute to the significance of the results. Table 2 shows the relationship of the household management and quality time with family towards the family and work balance. The reported P-values are also obtained by independent t-test to look for the relationship of each aspect with the quality of family and work balance.

For the aspect of household management, the significant means are reported for the following statements “I really need a maid to help managing the household work.” (P=0.021) and “Weekend are often spent by doing household works that were postponed on weekdays.” (P=0.009). The mean scores are higher among those who feel that they are not able to balance their family and work. Hence, most respondents without family-work balance agreed that they need maids (mean=3.29) and their weekend are always spent by doing household works (mean=4.71).

In another aspect of quality time with family, the significant means are reported for the statements “I find it difficult to socialize/spend quality time with my family due to workloads” (P=0.003) and “Children often complain that I did not spend much time with

them” ($P < 0.001$). The reported means are higher among those respondents who feel that they are not able to balance their family and work. Thus, they strongly agree that workloads do affect their quality time with families.

However, no significant mean difference reported for the following statements: “My spouse often helps in managing the household work” and “I always ensure that I can attend family or school programs that require parents' involvement”.

Table 2: Household management and quality time with family

Statements	Family and work balance		P-values
	Yes	No	
Household management			
I really need a maid to help managing the household work.	2.25 (1.08)	3.29 (1.38)	0.021*
Weekend are often spent by doing household work that were delayed on weekdays.	3.84 (0.84)	4.71 (0.49)	0.009*
My spouse often helps in managing the household work.	4.18 (0.96)	4.00 (1.00)	0.640
Quality time with family			
I find it difficult to socialize/spend quality time with my family due to workloads.	2.59 (1.06)	3.86 (0.69)	0.003*
Children often complain that I did not spend much time with them.	2.41 (0.97)	3.86 (0.90)	<0.001*
I always ensure that I can attend family or school programs that require parents' involvement.	4.16 (0.58)	4.14 (0.69)	0.929

Significant P-value (< 0.05)

In summary, for household management, women feel that their spouses often help and they do not see the needs of having maid at home. By getting help from spouses, working mothers can concentrate in managing their work and are able to handle their work-family conflict. However, their weekends are mostly spent for doing household works that are been postponed during the working days. Women also have good quality times with their families since they often make sure to attend any family or school events, and their children rarely complain that they did not spent time with them.

5. CONCLUSION

The study has discovered that in general married women working in public sector are not confronted with work-life conflict. This is reflected from the findings that most of the respondents agree that they are able to balance their work and family life. The main reason is because their spouses often help them with their housework which influence many of them to decide not to hire maid at home. However, their weekends are mostly spent by doing household works. This is because they have limited time to do the work during the

working days. The respondents are also have good quality times with their families. This is reflected through their regular attendance to any family or school events, and their children rarely complain that they did not spent time with them. The above findings may not be relevant to married women working in private sector as their nature of work, work environment and requirement are different than those working in a public sector. Therefore, further studies are essential to secure and enrich the understanding and awareness on the overall issues of work-life balance among married working women in Malaysia.

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